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ABSTRACT

This paper draws on the model of the sponsored mentoring relationship to explore the role of the teacher education institution in assisting both first year teachers and their assigned public school mentors. The mechanism for facilitating the mentoring relationship is already in place in the form of the sponsored mentoring relationship of student teaching. The sponsor (university), mentor (master teacher) and protege (student teacher) relationship is an accepted and functional structure on which to build. It is pointed out that the college of education is the appropriate agent to facilitate the induction experience. It can deal best with the process and is most familiar with the proposals for education reform and the needs of novices, mentors, and teacher education institutions. Novices need encouragement, and experienced teachers need to feel valued and to have opportunities to share their expertise. The college is in a position to take on the role of sponsor in order to facilitate the developmental relationships between mentor and novice. (JD)

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MENTORING FIRST YEAR TEACHERS:

The University's Role as Facilitator

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MENTORING FIRST YEAR TEACHERS:

The University's Role as Facilitator

Teacher education institutions can no longer relinquish responsibility for their graduates upon successful completion of student teaching. First year teachers are considered "novices" in the profession and require the support and continued guidance of their certifying institution (Berliner, 1988). The process of socialization to the profession, initiated in on-campus courses, transfers to the context of the school and classroom during student teaching. Therefore, both university and public school personnel are the natural partners in this induction process.

This paper draws on the model of the sponsored mentoring relationship to explore the role of the teacher education institution in assisting both first year teachers and their assigned public school mentors.

In order for the partners in a mentoring relationship to receive mutual support and validation, a sponsor is needed to participate as facilitator. The original sponsored mentoring relationship is recorded in Homer's Odyssey. As Odysseus ventures off to fight the Trojan War, he asks his own trusted friend and advisor to guide his son Telemachus. The friend, named Mentor, is intentional about nurturing and training his charge. It is noteworthy that the mentor and the protege had a facilitator -- a sponsor in Odysseus who initiated and legitimated the relationship. This classical myth provides a model for contemporary beginning teachers. The mechanism for facilitating the mentoring relationship is already in place in the form of the sponsored mentoring relationship of student teaching. The sponsor (university), mentor (master teacher) and protege (student teacher) relationship is an accepted and

functional structure on which to build.

THE ROLE OF THE SPONSOR IN THE MENTORING OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

Most mentor/protege programs are sponsored by a third party. The pairing of mentor/inductee teams is normally the building principal's responsibility, but the maintenance and support of that team has at least three possible sponsors:

1. Local state agencies, such as Educational Service Districts in Washington State, serve the function of distributing program funds close to the area of need. They serve as brokers, determining the needs of the mentor teams in surrounding districts and then contracting consultants to meet program goals. They are distanced from the local situation, yet attempt to discern the needs of the mentor/inductee teams.

2. The local school district can serve as facilitator to each team through the building principal. However, since the evaluation role is such a clear responsibility of most principals, they are in an awkward position if called upon to be the sole sponsor of the relationship--especially if the inductee is not progressing as expected.

3. The third possible sponsor is a local teacher education institution working in collaboration with surrounding districts to facilitate the experience for both the inductee and mentor. Since university personnel are familiar with the needs of beginning teachers, they do not need to contract out for appropriate programs or personnel, and since they are not responsible for evaluation of inductees they can focus on diagnosis of each situation; assisting where appropriate and supporting both members in sustaining the relationship.

Of these three candidates for the sponsoring role, the college emerges as the appropriate agent to facilitate the induction experience when one

considers: How socialization occurs into professions; the proposals for educational reform including implementing the Knowledge Base for Beginning Teachers (AACTE, 1989); and the needs of novices; needs of mentors; and needs of teacher education institutions.

SOCIALIZATION INTO PROFESSIONS

Sociologists have identified a number of stages that newcomers normally pass through as they enter an organization. These stages can be described as follows:

"Anticipatory Socialization" the initial phase, encompasses all the learning prior to entering the organization. Each student in a teacher education program brings certain predispositions to teaching accumulated over 17 years of in-class time observing teachers and teaching and this primary socialization must be penetrated by the values, norms and acceptable behaviors (skills and knowledge) of the profession. This penetration begins in professional education coursework.

The "Encounter Stage" (Porter et al, 1975) begins when the novice enters the organization and sees what it is really like. This initial induction begins in guided early field experiences and in student teaching and at this time some shifting in values, attitudes and skills occurs. In beginners the early idealism wanes as the reality of life in schools is experienced.

The third stage, "Change and Acquisition" (Porter, 1975) although begun during student teaching continues through the induction year of teaching. During this period the newcomer, acquiring the skills necessary to function in the profession, begins to adjust to group values and norms. Both "how to teach" (skills) and "how to be a teacher" (values and norms) are addressed during this extended phase. The pre-service coursework brings the novice to

this point and the continuity of in-service work under the guidance of a mentor and the university assures an interrelated and sequential induction program.

Teacher education personnel as initiators of the socialization process are the natural sponsors of the novices progression through the stages until socialization to the profession is accomplished under the guidance of a mentor.

Educational Reform

John Goodlad, current president of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE), attributes the numerous false-starts for school reform to the schools working alone on their agenda and teacher education institutions attending to theirs; the two never quite getting together to speak in one voice, to effect one plan, (Educating the Educators, (1989). Collaborative units between school districts and colleges of education, formalized through teacher induction support programs provide a necessary bridge for acting and speaking together.

The recent AACTE publication, Knowledge Base for Beginning Teachers, (1989) is currently being incorporated into teacher education curriculums. This compendium of research on teaching practice forms a theoretical base for educators. In order to insure that this knowledge base imparted in the college classroom is not lost on the way to the public school classroom, the continuity of college support personnel is needed to facilitate the novice's transfer of knowledge into appropriate practice.

Virtually every major reform movement calls for collaboration between schools and colleges and yet the natural bridge that already exists between our two institutions is overlooked. Extending linkages, similar to the

student teaching model, through the induction year can work for our mutual benefit.

Needs of Novices

In Washington State, the program evaluations of participants in the Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (Report to the Legislature, Jan. 1988) ranked "Morale and Personal Support" as the most important area of discussion for beginners and their mentors. Theorists concerned with the socialization process of beginning teachers (Veenman, 1984; Odell, 1986; Thies-Sprinthall, 1986) note the critical need for emotional support during the first year. Not getting that support has profound implications for the beginner's entire career, as Bush (1978) notes:

...the conditions under which a person carries out the first years of teaching have a strong influence on the level of effectiveness which that teacher is able to achieve and sustain over the years; on the attitudes which govern teachers' behavior over even a 40 year career; and, indeed, on the decision whether or not to continue in the teaching profession...

Induction to any profession is a time of great sensitivity and initial learning experiences in new and perhaps emotionally charged situations can leave an indelible imprint. Supportive mentoring relationships have the potential to ease the traumatic entry experiences of the beginner. The novice needs a supporter, not a supervisor; an advocate, not an evaluator. In other words, they need a sponsor to facilitate the "Dream", as Levinson (1978) would say. The sponsor as the "outside" member of the induction team has a facilitating role that is non-threatening to either party.

Needs of Mentors

There is little debate over who best fits the role of mentor in the induction of novices to the teaching profession -- certainly the experienced

classroom teacher is the undisputed candidate. But there is considerable debate about the role the teacher is to play as mentor; is it one of support and advocacy or one of supervision and evaluation; or a combination of the two? Since first year teachers ask for assistance apart from evaluation it is inconsistent to ask their mentors to act in a supervisory as well as support role. Such a dual responsibility contradicts both the theory and research on effective mentoring. It also stands in opposition to the generic definitions for the word "mentor" offered in the literature, of which Levinson's (1978) is representative:

The true mentor...fosters the young adult's development by believing in him [her], sharing the youthful Dream and giving it his [her] blessing, helping to define the newly emerging self in its newly discovered world, and creating a space in which the young (person) can work on a reasonably satisfactory life structure that contains the Dream...(p.98-99).

The sensitive nature of the self-disclosure involved in sharing the "Dream" precludes an evaluative role on the part of the mentor. Evaluation does not invite one to take the vulnerable stance implied in "Dream" construction. Certainly, teaching is harsh reality and not a dreamscape, but the hope and growth implied in designing and realizing a "Dream" breathes new life into the entire profession.

Erikson (1963) in his "adult development stages" describes experienced professionals as "generative" when they seek out a novice to guide and mentor. On the other hand, adults who do not seek out less experienced persons to assist begin to stagnate and degenerate. One can conclude that offering to be a mentor is not an entirely altruistic endeavor, but rather a mutually rewarding activity.

However, even though mentors have an innate desire to assist and nurture and beginners seek support and encouragement, not all mentoring

relationships have successful outcomes. There is obviously an element of "chemistry" that must be present if a developmental relationship is to be productive; this is also the critical area where the university can assist the mentors in assessing and enhancing their own mentoring skills.

Developmental Relationships

Clawson's (1987) contingency theory of developmental relationships is helpful in understanding the "chemistry" that must be present in order for a mentor/protege experience to be effective. He proposes "respect" and "trust" as the two contingencies. Respect for the mentor is essential. Mentors possessing those attributes desired by the protege will be held in high regard. Those responsible for sponsoring developmental relationships need to match the novice's expectations and professional aspirations with the mentor's skills and dispositions.

The second contingency, "trust", occurs if the individual is assured that s/he will not be embarrassed or that confidence will not be broken. Again, it is clear that evaluation can not be a part of the mentoring relationship for it could sabotage the trust component. The university as sponsor affirms and encourages such confidential dyads in student teaching and the reaffirmation of similar arrangements for the first year teacher are imperative.

NEEDS OF UNIVERSITY

Collecting data on its first year teachers is an NCATE standard (Standard 6.1) for all teacher education institutions. Since the requirement explicitly calls for teacher education program evaluation based on performance of its first year teachers, annual first year follow-up visits are mandatory.

The graduates provide a rich source of data to the university on the effectiveness of the preparation program as the beginners note areas in which they feel well prepared or deficient. Thus the personnel in teacher education institutions are in a position to speak to the current, expressed needs of first year teachers and their mentors. They are privy to information not readily available to either the local district or regional state education offices. Such data also can form the framework on which to build induction programs.

Conclusion

Novices in any activity need encouragement, but all the more in the isolated world of the classroom teacher. Experienced teachers need to feel valued and have opportunities to share their expertise. States and districts need to take the role of mentor teacher seriously and commit resources for inservice training in both the principles of practice and the principles of advising (Shulman and Colbert, 1987). The "mentor" role is a valid vehicle for empowering teachers to take charge of their profession as they guide and induct novices to teaching. The college is in a position to take the "Odysseus" role to sponsor and facilitate such developmental relationships through inservice seminars as requested by the teams.

If the school of the future is perceived as a "learning community", then the logical way to begin the trend is to socialize inductees to the profession as a team; beginners working with mentors in collaboration with a local teacher education institution -- a basic model for system change.

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